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Title of the Invention: METHOD OF ASSEMBLING MOTOR VEHICLE BODY

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【Identification of the Document】 SPECIFICATION

【Title of the Invention】 METHOD OF ASSEMBLING MOTOR VEHICLE  
BODY

【Claims】

5   【Claim 1】

A method of assembling a car body, the method comprising the steps of: vertically locating a lower welding end of a pair of side members relative to side ends of an underbody positioned at a predetermined position of a car body assembling line;  
10   locating the vertical side members to the underbody at not less than four front and rear portions of the lower welding end; and temporarily welding, in such a locating state, the side members to the underbody;

the car body assembly line for locating the underbody  
15   being provided, at sides of a predetermined portion thereof, with a slide base which is movable toward and away from the assembly line and on which a locator is removably placed,

the car body assembly line being provided, with a lifter for vertically moving with the removably placed locator when  
20   the slide base is positioned away from the assembly line,

the locator being placed onto the lifter when the lifter is at an upper position, the lifter being lowered for placing the locator onto the slide base positioned away from the assembly line, and the slide base being moved toward the car  
25   body assembly line for locating the side member, which is supported by the locator, relative to the underbody.

【Claim 2】

The method according to claim 1, wherein the lifter is lifted up to the upper position where another locator for replacement is placed onto a rear end of the lifter, while the used locator adjacent to the car body assembly line is moved from the slide base onto the lifter and then being removed therefrom, the slide base being moved away from the car body assembly line, then the lifter being lowered for placing said another locator onto the slide base.

#### 【Detailed Description of the Invention】

10     【0001】

#### 【Field of the Invention】

The present invention relates to a method of assembling a motor vehicle body, and specifically relates to a method for locating side members relative to an underbody for welding these members together.

15     【0002】

#### 【Prior Art】

A car body includes main parts such as an underbody, left and right side members, and a roof panel. These main parts are positioned relative to each other, using various locating jigs, and the positioned members are pre-fixed by spot welding using a welding machine, thereafter welded completely.

20     【0003】

A conventional method of assembling car body utilizes a typically large locating jig for locating the main parts. For example, a screen-like jig used to position the side member is larger than the side member as a whole. Such large locating

jigs are provided movably toward and away from sides of a car body assembly line, where the side member is moved by a transfer machine and placed in front of the locating jig which is then moved toward the car body assembly line and fixed at a predetermined position of the underbody. In this state, the side member is pre-fixed to the underbody.

【0004】

No patent or nonpatent document is cited.

【0005】

10   【Problems to be Solved】

The above-described screen-like locating jig is large and heavy, thus tends to require large facility investment at the beginning. Further, a lot of effort is required for removing the locating jig from a moving mechanism of the locating jig and replacing the locating jig with another one, corresponding to change (replacement) of types of manufactured cars, and the production line may be completely stopped during the replacement.

【0006】

20   Another conventional method of assembling car body utilizes a rotatable jig for quick replacement, where the rotatable jig is a triangle pole for corresponding to three types of manufactured cars, while being a square pole for corresponding to four types of manufacture cars. Due to this structure, such jig is larger than the screen-like jig in size and weight, thereby further increasing the facility investment at the beginning.

【0007】

It is therefore an object of the present invention to realize reduction in size and weight of the locating jig for side member used for (temporarily) welding the side members to the sides  
5 of the underbody, thereby reducing the facility investment at the beginning while also facilitating and speeding up the replacement of car types.

【0008】

【Means for Solving the Problems】

10 A method of assembling a car body according to the present invention comprises the steps of: vertically locating a lower welding end of a pair of side members relative to side ends of an underbody positioned at a predetermined position of a car body assembling line; locating the vertical side members  
15 to the underbody at not less than four front and rear portions of the lower welding end; and temporarily welding, in such a locating state, the side members to the underbody. The car body assembly line for locating the underbody is provided, at sides of a predetermined portion thereof, with a slide base  
20 which is movable toward and away from the assembly line and on which a locator is removably placed, and with a lifter for vertically moving with the removably placed locator when the slide base is away from the assembly line. The locator is placed onto the lifter when the lifter is at an upper position,  
25 and the lifter is lowered for placing the locator onto the slide base positioned away from the assembly line, then the slide base is moved toward the car body assembly line for locating



the side member, which is supported by the locator, relative to the underbody (claim 1).

【0009】

Further, according to the method of assembling a car body of  
5 the present invention, the lifter is lifted up to the upper  
position where another locator for replacement is placed onto  
a rear end of the lifter, while the used locator adjacent to  
the car body assembly line is moved from the slide base onto  
the lifter and then being removed therefrom, the slide base  
10 being moved away from the car body assembly line. Thereafter,  
the lifter is lowered to place the second locator onto the slide  
base (claim 2).

【0010】

A human operator may transfer and hold the side member upright  
15 manually or by using a transfer machine. The side member,  
after transferred to a human assembler, is attached to a locator.  
After the attachment, the side member is moved to a  
predetermined position of the underbody. Then, the left and  
right side members are positioned by four locators to be  
20 connected to the underbody at lower welding ends at not less  
than front and rear four portions, and pre-fixed to the  
underbody.

【0011】

Conventional locating jig for side member is needed to be much  
25 larger than the side member for clamping entire side member.  
According to the present invention, the side member is not  
supported entirely but a transfer hoist temporarily supports

to regulate the side member from side toppling, and four locators support in longitudinal, lateral, and vertical direction at only the front and rear portions of the lower welding end of the side member. In this way, the size and weight of the four locators can be reduced, which enables large reduction of the business investment at the beginning. Further, as the locator is light and compact, the worker can easily push to move the slide base supporting the locator. Thus, locating and temporary welding of the underbody and the side member can be performed easily and speedy. In addition, the compact locator allows a suitable shelf to be provided at the side of the car body assembly line, thereby providing a stock area for the locator without taking much space.

#### [0012]

In replacing locators, a locator for replacement is placed at the rear end of the lifter at the upper position, and after the used locator in front of the slide guide is removed from the lifter, necessary steps before locating next car body are only to retreat the vacant slide base, to lower the lifter so that the locator on the lifter is transferred to the slide base, and to advance the slide base, whereby the takt time can be largely shortened.

#### [0013]

#### [Mode for Carrying out the Invention]

Preferred embodiments of the present invention is specifically described below with reference to the accompanying drawings. Fig. 1 is a schematic view illustrating a side member temporary

welding station 1. The side member temporary welding station 1 is arranged at a predetermined position in a car body assembly line 2, as shown in Fig. 2. The car body assembly line 2 includes an underbody placing station arranged upstream of the side member temporary welding station 1. An underbody 3 placed in this underbody placing station as shown in Fig. 3 includes a rear portion (the right side in Fig. 3) which faces downstream of the car body assembly line 2 while being carried by a coaster moving along a transfer path such as a roller conveyor 11. The under body is sent to an underbody setting station 5 (#0) and to the side member temporary welding station 1 (#1).

【0014】

As shown in Fig. 2, the downstream side of the side member temporary welding station 1 (#1) is provided with a roof pre-setting station 6 (#2) where a roof panel is temporarily placed on a side member 4 whose lower welding end is finally welded, and a roof temporary welding station 7 (#3) in this order. A roof final welding station 8 (#4) is provided downstream of the roof temporary welding station 7 (#3). When many portions of the roof panel is to be permanently welded, as shown, the roof final welding station 8 may be divided to a plurality of roof final welding stations 8-1 (#4)-8-3 (#6) so that workload for final welding per one worker is not increased too much. The downstream side of the roof final welding station is provided with a final welding station 9 (#7) having a welding robot for locating and final welding, and also provided with an unloading station 10 (#8).

【0015】

In the car body assembly line 2, the underbody 3 and so on are carried between the stations by the roller conveyor 11 shown in Fig. 4(A) and coasters 13a, 13b moving along the roller conveyor 11 as described below. The roller conveyor 11 includes a plurality of rotatable rollers 11a, whose longitudinal direction is perpendicular to the transfer direction of the under body 3 and so on, each spaced to each other at a predetermined distance in the transfer direction of the underbody 3 and so on.

【0016】

In the side member temporary welding station 1 (#1) and the roof pre-setting station 6 (#3), for adjusting the height of the underbody 3 corresponding types of cars, as shown in Fig. 4(B), the conveyor 11 is lifted by an elevating mechanism such as a pantograph mechanism 14, for example. The pantograph mechanism 14 includes a plurality of supporting members 14a pivotably connected by a pin 14 and an air cylinder 14c reciprocally moving the lower end of one of the supporting members 14a via a sliding mechanism 14d..

【0017】

As shown in Fig. 5, the coasters 13a, 13b on which the underbody 3 is placed to be carried along the roller conveyor 11 include a base 131 having a width shorter than the length of the rollers 11a and a length long enough to cover at least two rollers 11a. One widthwise end of the base 131 is provided with a L-shaped angle bar 132 fixed by a bolt for preventing widthwise movement

during transfer. The upper surface of the base 131 is provided with a plurality of vertical supporting members 133 for supporting the underbody 3 at a proper height.

【0018】

5       As shown in Fig. 4(A), the coasters 13a, 13b are arranged to support the underbody 3 at four or more portions, at least two portions at each of the front and rear portions. A worker pushes the underbody 3 by hand to transfer the underbody 3 on the roller conveyor 11.

10      【0019】

As shown in Figs. 6(A), 6(B), the side member temporary welding station 1 is provided with four sets of lifters 15, two sets at each of front and rear portions of sides of the car assembly line 2, perpendicularly to the car body assembly line 2. Each  
15   lifter 15 is provided with a plurality of locators 16 for locating the side member 4. As shown in Fig. 7, in the side member temporary welding station 1, the side members 4, 4 are positioned by the locators 16 and their lower ends are pre-fixed to the underbody 3.

20      【0020】

Specifically, the side member temporary welding station 1 is provided with a lifter 15 arranged symmetrically at the sides of the car body assembly line 2 and perpendicularly to the car body assembly line 2. Below each lifter 15, a slide guide 17  
25   (see Fig. 1) extending in parallel to the lifter 15 is provided. The rear side of the slide guide 17 is provided with a slide base 18 which is reciprocally moved along the slide guide 17

by the worker. The locator 16 placed on the lifter 15 above the slide base 18 is moved downward and transferred to the slide base 18 to be positioned thereon. Thereafter, the slide base 18 is moved along the slide guide 17 to move the locator 16 toward and away from the car body assembly line 2.

**【0021】**

Each locator 16 includes a bottom surface which is provided with four wheels 20 rotatable on the floor and also provided with spacers 21 and a plurality of holes 22 into which locating pins 25 of the slide base 18 are inserted. With such an arrangement, the locators 16 are moved toward (forward) and away from (backward) the car body assembly line 2 as the worker pushes and pulls the slide base 18. As shown in Fig. 8, the lifter 15 includes a rear end provided with guards 19 for preventing the wheels 20 from falling, and with a locating member 23 with which the wheel 20 contacts for locating the locator 16 provisionally.

**【0022】**

As shown in Fig. 6(B), the slide base 18 engaged and moved with the locators 16 includes a top surface provided with spacers 24 which contact with the spacers 21, in addition to the locating pins 25 inserted in the holes 22 of the locators 16. The lifter 15 can be lifted up to a position X in Fig. 6(B) at which the top surface of the lifter 15 is flush with the floor level. On the other hand, the lifter 15 can be lowered down to a position Y. In the lowering process to the position Y, the locating pin 25 of the slide base 18 is inserted into the hole 22 of

the locator 16, so that the locator 16 is positioned on the slide base 18 and engaged therewith.

【0023】

As shown in Fig. 9, the slide base 18 may include a base 18a  
5 which is provided with vertical locating pins 25 for locating a plurality of locators 16, and may be provided with a handle 18b which is pushed or pulled by the worker. As shown in Figs. 10A and 10B, each locator 16 may also be supported by a respective slide base 18. This structure is preferable that  
10 the worker can get in between two locators 16 to perform temporary welding.

【0024】

In the above structure where each locator 16 is supported by a respective slide base 18, a plurality of slide bases 18 are  
15 connected to each other via a removable connecting rod 26. Preferably, the worker pushes or pulls the connecting rod 26 to move the slide bases 18 together forwardly and backwardly. The connecting rod 26 may be linear as a whole, but desirably, is a crank having a bending portion 26a between the locators  
20 16, as shown. With such crank-like connecting rod 26, when the bending portion 26a is positioned downward as shown, the connecting rod 26 does not obstruct the operation at the upper portion of the side member 4. When the bending portion 26 is positioned upward as indicated by chain double-dashed lines  
25 26a', the connecting rod 26 does not obstruct the operation at the lower portion of the side member 4.

【0025】

As shown in Fig. 10B, the slide base 18 may be provided with a angle 27 at the front part, and the angle 27 may contact with a stopper 28 for defining the forward movement of the slide base 18. The stopper 28 includes a jaw 30 which is operated  
5 by an air cylinder 29 to clamp the angle 27, thereby firmly holding the slide base 18 at a determined position.

【0026】

For example, the lifter 15 arranged above and parallel to the slide guide 17 is moved up and down between the upper position  
10 indicated by solid lines in Fig. 11 and the lower position indicated by chain double-dashed lines, using a pantograph mechanism similar to the one shown in Fig. 4(B). When the lifter 15 is lifted to the upper position indicated by solid lines, its top surface is flush with the floor level. In this  
15 state, the locator 16 provided with the wheels 20 can be easily pushed by the worker to be moved on the floor, and be transferred to the rear end of the lifter 15. Thereafter, the wheel 20 contacts with the locating member 23 to provisionally position the locator 16 on the lifter 15, while the slide base 18 is  
20 moved backward to the rear end of the slide guide 17. In this state, the lifter 15 is lowered, and during the lowering process, the locating pin 25 of the slide base 18 is fitted into the hole 25 of the locator 16, whereby the locator 16 is engaged with and positioned on the slide base 18. When the lifter 15  
25 is further lowered, the wheel 20 of the locator 16 is detached from the lifter 15, and the locator 16 is finally positioned on the slide base 18.



【0027】

Next, the locator 16 transferred and positioned on the slide base 18 holds the side member 4, and the slide base 18 advances along the slide guide 17 toward the car body assembly line 2, whereby the side member 4 is moved toward the car body assembly line 2 to be positioned at the side of the underbody 3 which is on standby. In this state, the lower welding end of the side member 4 is pre-fixed to the positioned underbody 3 by the worker. If each locator 16 is supported by a respective slide base 18 as described above, the temporary welding operation can be facilitated by enabling the worker to work between the front and rear slide bases 18, 18, by moving the bending portion 26a of the connecting rod 26 between the lower part and the upper part (26a'), or by removing the connecting rod 26.

【0028】

A plurality of locators 16 are stocked for replacement in the vicinity of the car body assembly line 2. As indicated by reference number 1 in Fig. 12, one of the locators 16 is moved by the worker utilizing the wheels 20 on the floor, and is transferred to the lifter 15 at the upper position flush with the floor level. When the lifter 15 is lowered as indicated by reference number 2, the locator 16 placed on the lifter 15 is transferred and positioned on the slide base 18 which is on standby at the rear end of the slide guide 17 (see Fig. 1). As indicated by reference number 3, the slide base 18 supporting the locator 16 is moved by the worker and advances along the

slide guide 17 to the position indicated by solid lines, where the side member 4 is positioned by the locator 16. Next, the slide base 18 is pushed by the worker to advance along the slide guide 17 to the position indicated by chain double-dashed lines.

5 In this state, the underbody 3 which is transferred to the side member temporary welding station 1 to be on standby and the side member 4 which is transferred to the underbody 3 by the locator 16 are positioned to each other at the bottom welding ends contacting at two sets of front and rear portions, four

10 portions in total. After the positioned underbody 3 and the side member 4 are pre-fixed at the bottom welding ends, the locator 16 is released, and as indicated by reference number 4, is retreated with the slide base 18 from the chained line position to the solid line position in Fig. 12. Thereafter,

15 next side member 4 is positioned and supported at the locator 16 to be on standby for next temporary welding of the underbody 3 and the side member 4.

【0029】

The same procedure as described above is repeated, when the

20 next underbody 3 transferred to the side member temporary welding station 1(#1) is of the same type as the previous underbody 3. Specifically, the underbody 3 advances from the solid line position to the chain double-dashed line position in Fig. 12, and pre-fixed to the side member 4. Next, the

25 locator 16 is retreated to the solid line position and holds next side member 4 which is positioned to be on standby for next temporary welding of the underbody 3 and the side member

4.

【0030】

The procedure of the replacement of car types is described below. When an underbody 3 of a type different from the previous underbody 3 is transferred to the side member temporary welding station 1, the previous locator 16 needs to be change, or replaced with a locator 16 of another type. In the replacement, the slide base 18 and the previous locator 16 are positioned at the standby position indicated by the solid lines in Fig. 12, then as indicated by reference number 5, the lifter 15 is lifted to the upper position flush with the floor level. During this process, the wheel 20 of the locator 16 rides on the lifter 15, and when the lifter 15 is further lifted, the locator 16 is detached from the slide base 18 and transferred to the lifter 15. After the lifter 15 is lifted up to be flush with the floor level, the worker moves the locator 16 utilizing the wheel 20 from the lifter 15 to the floor. Thereafter, the locator is moved on the floor to be back to a predetermined position at a locator stock area near the car body assembly line 2. On the other hand, as indicated by reference number 6, the slide base 18 is retreated to the rear end of the slide guide, while another locator 16 is moved by the worker utilizing the wheel 20 and placed on the rear end of the lifter 15 at the upper limit .

25 【0031】

As described above, while the previous locator is removed for replacement, the slide base 18 is retreated to the rear end

of the slide guide 17 and the next locator 16 is placed on the lifter 15 to be on standby. Thus, after the lifter 15 is lowered to transfer the locator 16 to the slide base 18, necessary process to position the car of another type is only to advance  
5 the slide base 18. As a result, the takt time can be reduced.

【0032】

The locators 16 used in the above procedure are more compact than conventional one. Therefore, locators 16 for replacement can be prepared near the car body assembly line 2. In the  
10 replacement, the worker can manually push and transfer the locator 16 to the lifter 15 easily, utilizing the wheel 20. Differently, conventional large jig has difficulty in having a space to be prepared near the car body assembly line 2, and is typically stored at a place apart from the car body assembly  
15 line 2, and transferred to the side member temporary welding station 1, using a special transfer line. According to the present invention, the compact locator 16 having wheels 20 makes such transfer line for jig unnecessary.

【0033】

20 As described above, the side member 4 positioned to be held at a predetermined position of the locator 16 is transferred and set at a predetermined position of the underbody 3 which is transferred to be on standby at the side member temporary welding station 1, as shown in Fig. 2. In this way, the bottom  
25 welding ends of the set side members 4 can be precisely positioned relative to the side welding ends of the underbody 3, thereby performing temporary welding with high accuracy.

【0034】

The underbody 3 and the side member 4 temporarily welded to each other are transferred to the next roof pre-setting station 6 (#2) in car body assembly line 2. The roof pre-setting station is described referring to Fig. 13. At the roof pre-setting station 6, a roof panel 31 is temporarily placed to bridge the top portion of the side members 4 pre-fixed to the sides of the underbody 3. Further at the roof pre-setting station 6, the underbody 3 and the side members 4 are permanently welded. The roof panel 31 is transferred and placed on the side members 4 by the worker manually or using a manual or automatic hoist. Thereafter, the bottom welding ends of the side members 4 are permanently welded by two welding machines at each side, four machines in total, for example.

15 【0035】

The temporary welding station 7 (#3) is described referring to Figs. 14-21. In the temporary welding station 7, the roof panel 31 temporarily placed on the side members 4 at the roof pre-setting station 6 (#2) is now positioned and pre-fixed to the side members 4. The roof temporary welding station is provided with a pair of frames 34 arranged at the sides of the car body assembly line 2, a pair of joisted jigs 35, 36 removably provided to bridge between the upsides of the frames 34, a hoist for transferring the jigs 35, 36, and a spot welding machine (not shown) for temporarily fixing the roof panel 31 to the side member 4.

【0036】

The present invention can be also applied to fix a bridging member such as a header board or frame back for bridging between the side members 4, instead of fixing the roof panel 31. Specifically, the header board or frame back may be attached  
5 at the bottom surface of the roof panel 31 in advance, or may be attached to the front and rear portions between the side members 4 before the roof panel 31 is fixed to the side members 4, and the present invention can be applied in the latter case.

【0037】

10 As shown in Figs. 14 and 15, the frame 34 includes a portal member having a top surface provided with a clamp mechanism for removably attaching the end of the joisted jigs 35, 36 at predetermined front and rear portions.

【0038】

15 As shown in Fig. 16, each of the joisted jigs 35, 36 includes, in the vicinity of the ends, a bottom side provided with a pair of clamp arms 39. The clamp arms 39 include movable claws manually operated or driven by an air cylinder, for connecting upper welding ends of the side member 4 to side welding ends  
20 of the roof panel 31 at front and rear portions.

【0039】

In the previous processes, the side member 4 is pre-fixed and then permanently welded to the underbody 3 to be one member, while the coasters 13a, 13b locating and supporting the  
25 underbody 3 are placed on a stationary system including the floor. In this state, the roof panel 31 temporarily placed to bridge the upper ends of the side members 4 is connected

to the side member 4 by the joisted jigs 35, 36, and the four welding portions of the roof panel 31 and the side members 4 are positioned on the stationary system via the frame 34. In this way, four portions of each side member 4, eight portions  
5 in total, at upper, lower, front and rear welding ends are all positioned on the stationary system, and four welding ends at the corners of the roof panel 31 are also positioned on the floor. As the roof panel 31 and the side members 4 are pre-fixed in this positioned state, a front window opening 40 and a rear  
10 window opening 41 are not distorted and can be formed as desired front window opening 40 and rear window opening 41.

【0040】

In the conventional assembling method of the side member 4 and the roof panel 31, as described above, the side members 4 may  
15 slightly distorted at the two steps for transferring the side members 4 to the underbody 3, and due to thus distortion, clamping position of the roof panel 31 may be slightly deviated. Further, when the roof panel 31 is clamped at the lower surface of the large jig to be lowered and positioned at the upper end  
20 of the side member 4, a sophisticated mechanism and advanced maintenance skill are required for precise control with high dimensional accuracy of moving such large and heavy jigs up and down. Finally, trial products of the front window opening 40 and the rear window opening 41 are checked to be fitted with  
25 window shields. When checking and adjusting each jig for correcting a bad fit, it is difficult to find out which locating of the underbody 3, side members 4, and roof panel 31 causes

the bad fit, even utilizing a precision device.

【0041】

On the other hand, in the present embodiment, the side member 4 is transferred only once and thus unlikely to be distorted. Further, as the four corners of the roof panel 31 and the upper welding ends of the side members 4 at the front and rear portions are clamped at or connected to the stationary system, the front and rear window openings 40, 41 are very highly reliable in their form and dimension. Especially, as the roof panel 31 is upwardly convex and may elastically expand and contract, only the upper welding ends of the side members 4 at the front and rear portions are needed to be precisely positioned relative to the stationary floor via the joisted jigs 35, 36 and the frame 34. In this way, the front and rear window openings 40, 41 are never affected even the pressed roof panel 31 has some distortion or warpage at the portions other than the ends of the openings 40, 41. As a result, even a bad fit is caused at the window shield, it is much easier than the conventional art to find out the cause and correct the position.

20 【0042】

As the clamp arms 39 provided at joisted jigs 35, 36 vary with the car type, individual clamp arm 39 is necessary for respective car type. In the illustrated example, the entire joisted jigs 35, 36 including the clamp arm 39 vary with the car type, and a plurality of types of joisted jigs 35, 36 are prepared near the car body assembly line 2. As the joisted jigs 35, 36 are attached on a higher position of the frame 34,



as shown in Figs. 16 and 17, the joisted jigs 35, 36 are desirably stored at mounts 42-1, 42-2. The mounts 42-1, 42-2 have height almost the same as the frame 34 and provided adjacent to the car body assembly line 2.

5    **【0043】**

The joisted jigs 35, 36 may be stored at one of the mounts 42-1, 42-2. For increasing the number of replacement or for reducing takt time of the replacement, the mount 42-2 may be provided at the other side, in other words, both of the mounts 42-1, 10 42-2 may be provided at the same time. With such an arrangement, the mount 42-1 serves as a stock area for loading, and the other mount 42-2 serves as a stock area for unloading, or both of the mounts may serve as the stock areas for loading. The replacement is basically performed by the worker for both of 15 attaching and removing of the joisted jigs 35, 36, though for reducing the takt time of the replacement, a transfer means may be provided at the other mount 42-4 to attach and remove the joisted jigs 35, 36.

**【0044】**

20 The joisted jigs 35, 36 are spaced to each other longitudinally of the roof panel 31, thereby providing a wide working space, between the joisted jigs 35, 36, which enables access to the welding ends between the side members 4 and the roof panel 31 while facing the side member 4. Therefore, the temporary 25 welding of the roof panel 31 and the side members 4 can be performed by a relatively short reach, thereby minimizing the welding machine and simplifying the jigs. Further, due to the

facilitated access between the roof panel 31 and the side members 4, another welding machine for final welding can be provided in addition to the welding machine for temporary welding. As a result, increase of steps performed at one station reduces the number of the entire stations of the car body assembly line 2, thereby shortening the car body assembly line 2.

【0045】

When comparing the joisted jigs 35, 36 to conventional jigs for the roof panel, as the jigs for the side members 4, the conventional jigs for the roof panel are a size larger than the roof panel 31, thereby requiring large business investment and much time for replacing the jigs. Contrary, the jigs according to the present invention are elongated and thus don't take much space. Thus, various joisted jigs 35, 36 may be stored in a small space near the car body assembly line 2 by providing a suitable shelf. In this way, replacement time can be shortened and transfer system for the jigs can be omitted.

【0046】

Fig. 18(A) shows a transfer hoist 50 as an example of a transfer device for replacing the joisted jigs 35, 36. As shown, the reference number 51 indicates a ceiling rail. The ceiling rail 51 is provided with a hoist 52, which is an example of the elevating mechanism hung therefrom and moves a movable rail 53 up and down (see Fig. 18B). A fixed rail 54 is provided below the ceiling rail 51, and partly formed with a space 55 in which the movable rail 54 is inserted. The upper end of

the space 55 is provided with a stopper 56 for defining the upper limit of the movable rail 53. The jig 35 (36) is hung by a plurality of pulleys 57. The pulley 57 is rotatably movable along the movable rail 53 and fixed rail 54.

5    **【0047】**

The joisted jig 35 (36) corresponding to types of manufacture cars are transferred by the pulleys 57 along the fixed rail 54 to the movable rail 53, or to the replacing portion above the roof panel 31. Thereafter, as shown in Fig. 18(B), the  
10 movable rail 53 is lowered by the hoist 52, and the joisted jigs 35, 36 are positioned on the frames 34, 34 at the both sides.

**【0048】**

A rail swaying prevention mechanism 60 as shown in Figs. 19(A),  
15 19(B) is preferably provided, as the joisted jigs 35, 36 cannot be bridged at the determined position if the movable rail 53 sways while lowering the joisted jig 35, 36. The illustrated mechanism 60 includes a fixed guide 61 provided at the ceiling downwardly, an upright member 62 extending from the movable  
20 rail 53, and a roller 63 rotatably along the guide 61 for preventing the movable rail 53 from swaying.

**【0049】**

As shown in Fig. 18(B), when the movable rail 53 is lowered away from the fixed rail 54, the pulleys 57 may fall out of  
25 the movable rail 53. To prevent the falling, safety mechanisms 58 for the pulley, or stoppers 58 as shown in Figs. 20A may be provided at the ends of the movable rail 53 for preventing

the pulley 57 from moving along the movable rail 53 using a spring (not shown). As shown in Fig. 20B, when the movable rail 53 is inserted in the space 55 of the fixed rail 54, one end of the stopper 58 is pushed down by the stopper 56 due to the biasing force of the spring. In this way, the stopper is brought into a horizontal posture, whereby the pulley 57 can move from the movable rail 53 to the fixed rail 54 or from the fixed rail 54 to the movable rail 53.

【0050】

After being bridged at the determined position at the frames 34, the joisted jigs 35, 36 are fixed to the frame 34 by a locating mechanism 70 shown in Fig. 21. In the illustrated example, the top surface of the frame 34 is formed with a locating pin 71, while the joisted jigs 35, 36 are formed with a hole 72 in which the locating pin 71 is inserted. After the locating pin 71 is inserted in the hole 72, a clamp arm 73 is used to fix the joisted jigs 35, 36 to the frame 34.

【0051】

Figs. 22(A) is a front view illustrating a replaceable locating mechanism 80. The mechanism 80 includes an upper part 81 and a lower part 82 arranged vertically, and the lower part 82 is fixed to the floor while the upper part 81 is rotatably connected to the lower part 82 via a pin 83. The upper part 81 and the lower part 82 are connected to a drive rod of the air cylinder 84. The upper part 81 can be switched into a vertical posture illustrated by solid lines or into an inclined posture illustrated by broken lines by moving the drive rod out from

and into the air cylinder body. Reference numbers 85 and 86 indicate spacers and locating pin, respectively.

【0052】

As described above, the upper part 81 which can be inclined prevents the interference between the supporting member 133a and the upper portion 81 of the locating mechanism 80. As illustrated by chain double-dashed lines, suppose that a coaster 13c includes a supporting member 133a which largely extends in lateral direction beyond the roller conveyor 11 (see Fig. 1). In this case, when the coaster 13c moves on the roller conveyor 11 toward or away from the figure, the upper portion 81 of the locating mechanism 80 is inclined by the air cylinder 84 as shown by the chain lines, thereby being moved away from the transfer path of the supporting member 133a of the coaster 13c and not obstructing the transfer of the coaster 13c. When using a fixed locating mechanism, as shown in Fig. 22(B), a space S is provided for another locating mechanism in addition to the mechanism 80.

【0053】

The present invention being thus described, it is obvious that the present invention is not limited to the above embodiment but the same may be modified in various ways. For example, though the worker transfers the side member 4 by hand in the above embodiment, the worker may use a roller conveyor. As shown in Fig. 6(A), more than three locators 16 may be provided at one side of the car body assembly line 2, corresponding to a long car body. When more than three locators 16 are provided,

more than three sets of slide guides 17 and slide bases 18 are also provided at one side. The frames 34, 34 without a connecting portion facilitate the temporary placing of the roof panel 31 to the determined position on the side members 4, 4 or the temporary welding, as the space between the frames 34, 34 can be utilized. However, when the frames 34, 34 are required to be strengthened, the frames 34, 34 may be provided with a connecting portion.

[0054]

10 [Effect of the Invention]

As described above, the side members placed on the underbody are positioned relative to the underbody, at not less than four front and rear portions of the lower welding ends, by at least four locators positioned at determined positions. In this positioned manner, the underbody and the side members are pre-fixed, thereby realizing remarkable reduction of the locators in size, large reduction of the business investment at the beginning, and speed up of replacing operation, contrarily to conventional assembly method using large jigs for clamping entire side member. Advantageously, as the weight and size of the locator is reduced, the worker performs the replacement of the locators corresponding to change of car types. Further, in the combination of slide base for supporting the locator and the lifter, the locator for replacement is prepared at the rear end of the lifter at the upper position. In this way, after the used locator in front of the slide guide is removed from the lifter, necessary steps

before locating next car body are only to retreat the slide base, to lower the lifter, and to advance the slide base, whereby the takt time can be largely shortened.

**[BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS]**

5   **[Fig. 1]** is a schematic perspective view illustrating a temporary welding station for a side member.

**[Fig. 2]** is a schematic plan view illustrating a car body assembly line.

10   **[Fig. 3]** is a perspective view illustrating an underbody and the side member.

**[Fig. 4]** (A) is a schematic side view illustrating a roller conveyor. (B) is a schematic side view illustrating the roller conveyor with an elevating mechanism at the side member temporary welding station and a roof temporary welding station.

15   **[Fig. 5]** is a schematic perspective view illustrating a coaster for transferring the underbody.

**[Fig. 6]** (A) is a plan view illustrating a transfer mechanism for the side member at the side member temporary welding station. (B) is an enlarged section view taken along a line A-A in Fig. 6(A).

20   **[Fig. 7]** is a side view illustrating the side member at the temporary welding station.

**[Fig. 8]** is a schematic perspective view illustrating the rear end of a lifter having a locating member for locating a locator provisionally.

25   **[Fig. 9]** is a perspective view illustrating a unified slide base according to a first embodiment.

【Fig. 10】 (A) is a side view illustrating separated slide bases according to a second embodiment. (B) is a front view of the same.

5 【Fig. 11】 is a schematic perspective view illustrating methods for placing the locator on the slide base and moving toward the car body assembly line, and then locating the side member to the underbody.

【Fig. 12】 is a schematic plan view illustrating a method for replacing the locators.

10 【Fig. 13】 is a schematic perspective view illustrating a roof pre-setting station.

【Fig. 14】 is a schematic perspective view illustrating the roof pre-setting station.

15 【Fig. 15】 is a schematic side view of the roof pre-setting station.

【Fig. 16】 is a schematic front view of the roof pre-setting station.

【Fig. 17】 is a schematic plan view of the roof pre-setting station.

20 【Fig. 18】 (A) is a schematic front view illustrating a transfer system for joisted jigs used at the roof pre-setting station. (B) is a schematic side view illustrating the positioned joisted jigs.

25 【Fig. 19】 (A) is a schematic front view illustrating a swaying prevention mechanism for a movable rail at the roof temporary welding station. (B) is a schematic side section view or the same.



【Fig. 20】 (A) is a schematic front view illustrating a principal part of a falling prevention device for pulley at the roof temporary welding station. (B) is a schematic front view illustrating the falling prevention device for pulley of Fig.

5 20(A), where the pulley is moving.

【Fig. 21】 is a front section view illustrating a locating clamp mechanism for the joisted jigs at the roof temporary welding station.

10 【Fig. 22】 (A) is a front view illustrating a replaceable locating mechanism, and (B) is a side view illustrating a fixed locating mechanism.

【Legend】

	1	side member temporary welding station2	car
		body assembly line	
15	3	underbody	
	4	side member	
	5	underbody pre-setting station	
	6	roof pre-setting station	
	7	roof temporary welding station	
20	8	roof finally welding station	
	11	roller conveyor	
	14	elevating mechanism (pantograph mechanism)	
	15	lifter	
	16	locator	
25	17	slide guide	
	18	slide base	
	22	hole	

	24	spacer
	25	locating pin
	31	roof panel
	34	frame
5	35, 36	joisted jig
	39	clamp arm
	40	front window opening
	41	rear window opening
	42-1, 42-2	mount
10	50	transfer machine for joisted jig (transfer hoist)
	52	elevating mechanism (elevating hoist)
	53	movable rail
	54	fixed rail
15	55	space for movable rail
	56	stopper for defining the upper limit of movable rail
	57	pulley
	58	safety mechanism (stopper)
20	60	swaying preventing mechanism for movable rail
	70	locating mechanism for joisted jig
	80	locating mechanism

**[Identification of the Document]**

**ABSTRACT**

**[Abstract] [Object]** To reduce weight and size of jigs for temporary welding of side members to an underbody, to reduce the business investment at the beginning, and to facilitate and speed up replacing operation.

**[Means]** A pair of side members 4 are held on by locators 16 positioned on a lifter. The lifter 15 is lowered to a slide base 18 with which the locator 16 is engaged. The slide base is moved forward along the slide guide 17. Here, the lower welding ends of the side members 4 held by the locators 16 are positioned relative to the lower welding ends of the underbody 3 positioned at a determined position of a car body assembly line 2. In this positioned manner, the under welding ends of the underbody 3 and the side members 4 are pre-fixed. Corresponding to change of car types, the locator 16 is removed from the advanced lifter 15, and another locator 16 on the retreated lifter 15 is moved by the slide base 18 to be replaced.

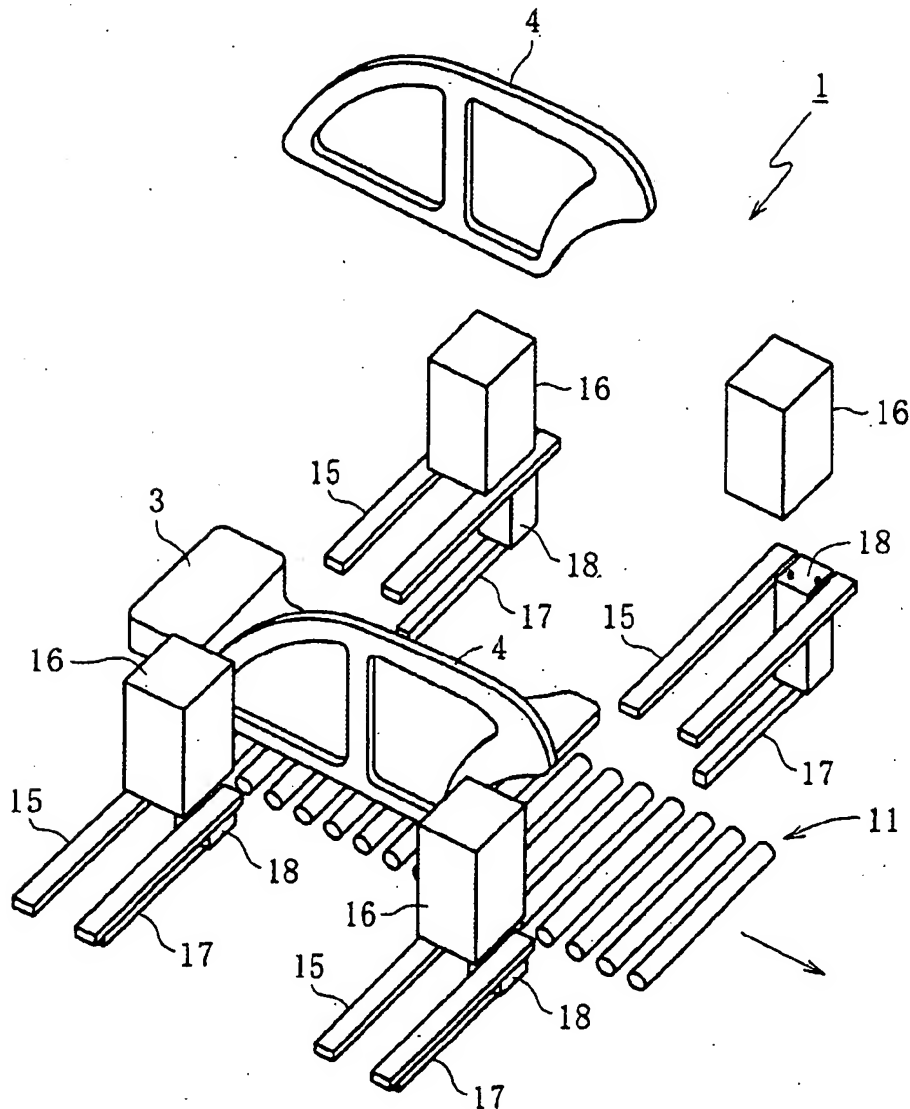
**[Selected Figure]**

Fig. 1

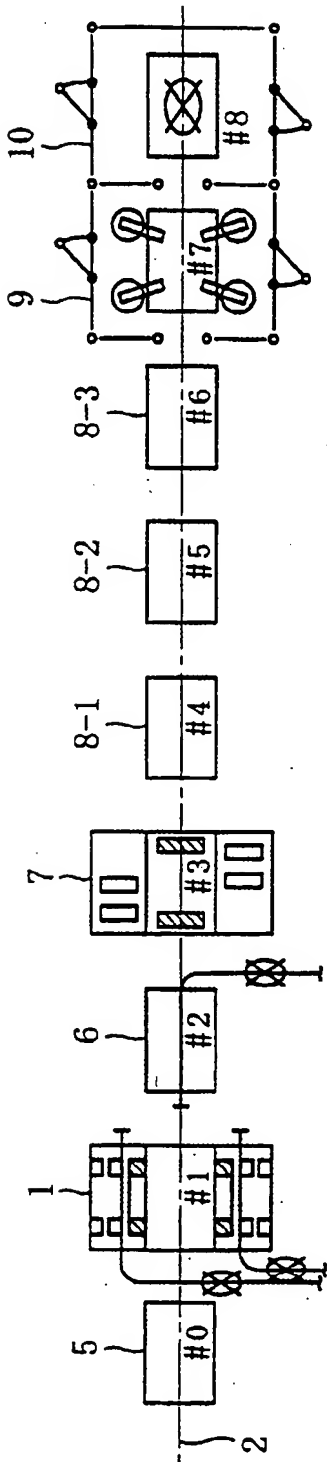
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Drawings

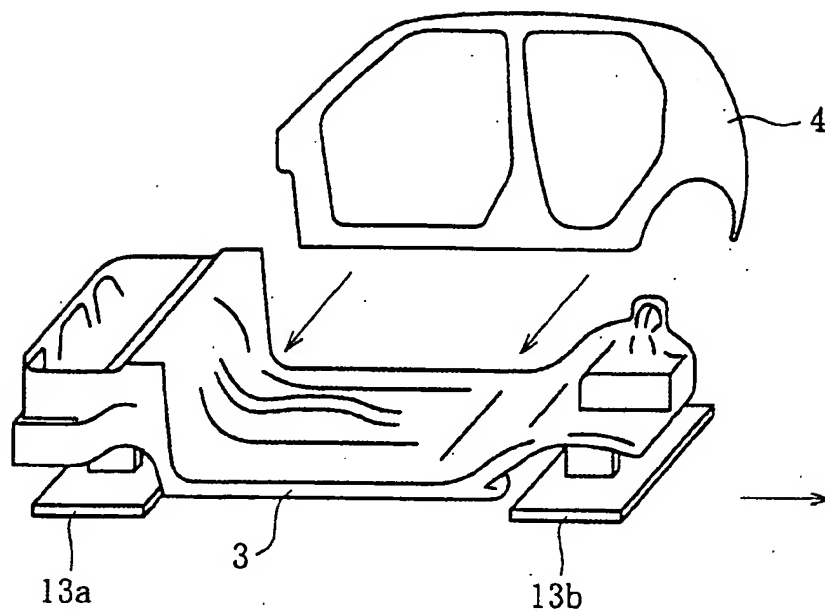
【Fig. 1】



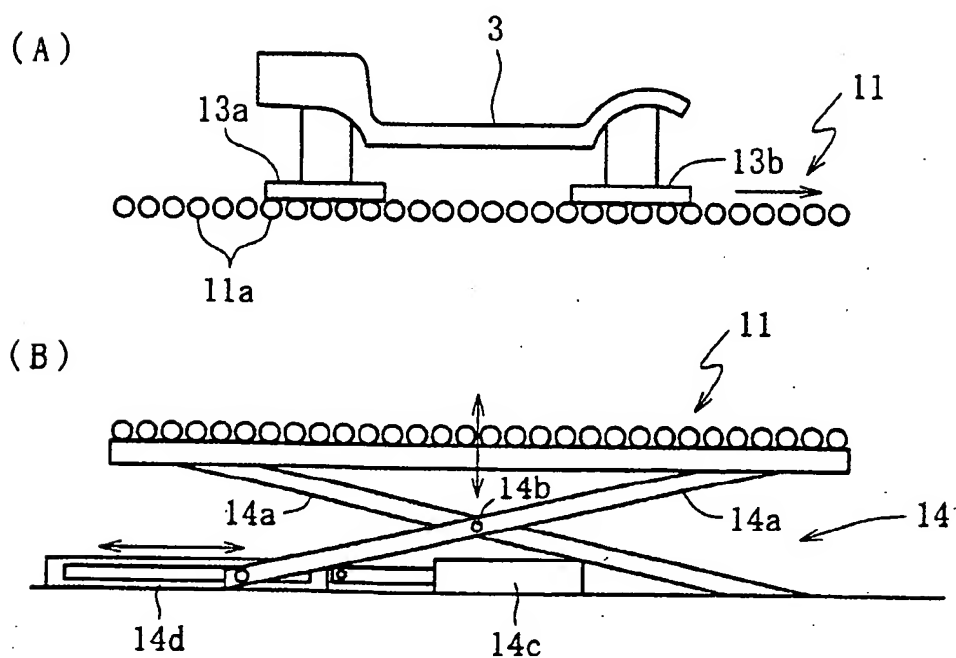
【Fig. 2】



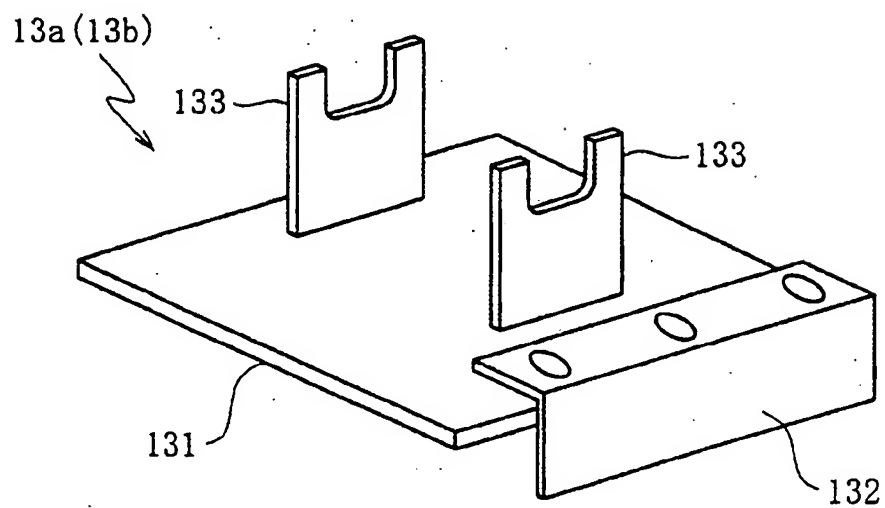
【Fig. 3】



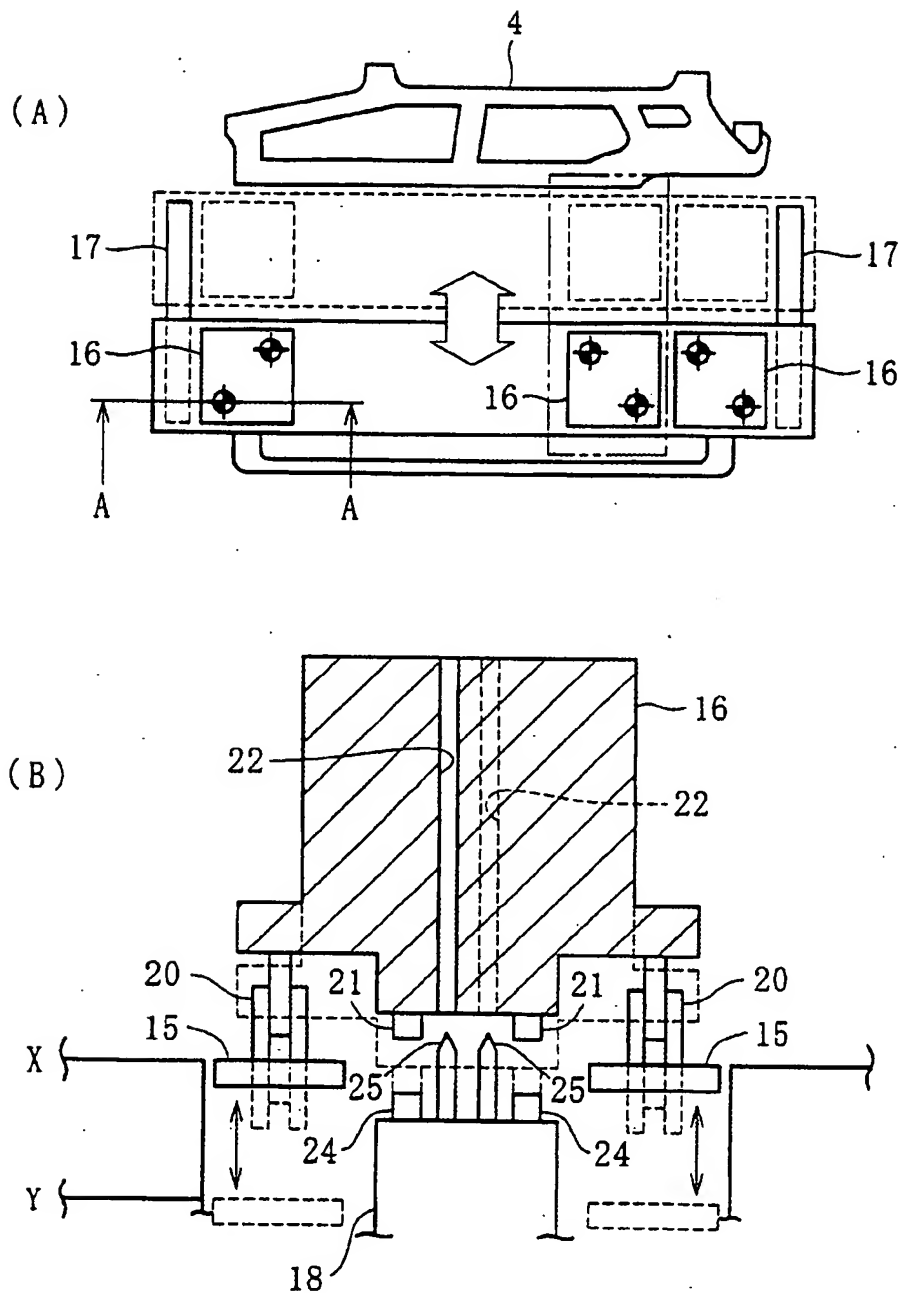
【Fig. 4】



【Fig. 5】

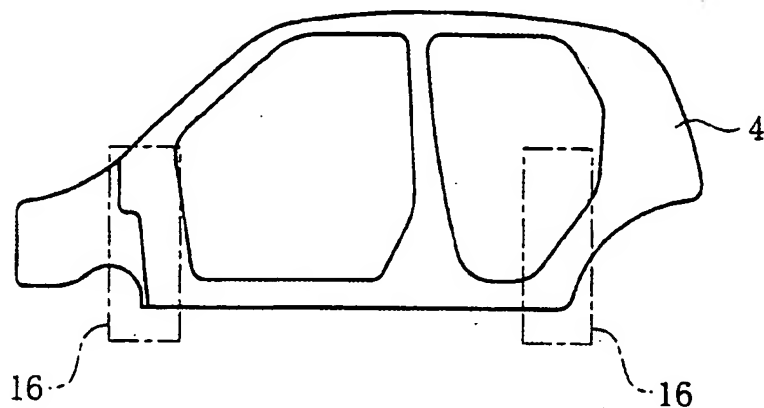


【Fig. 6】

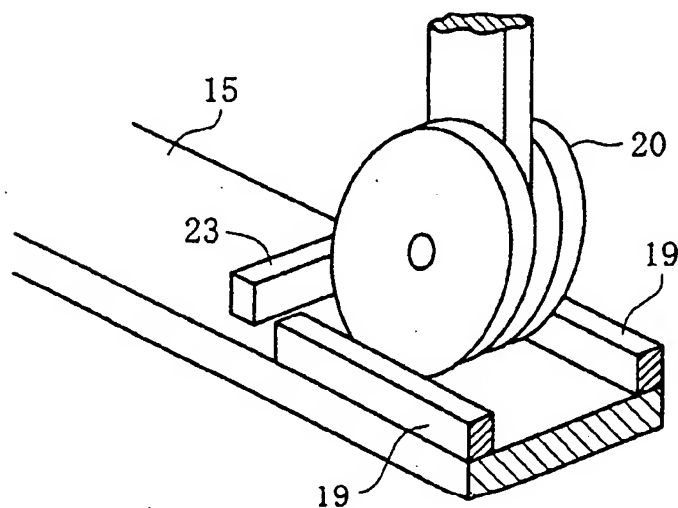




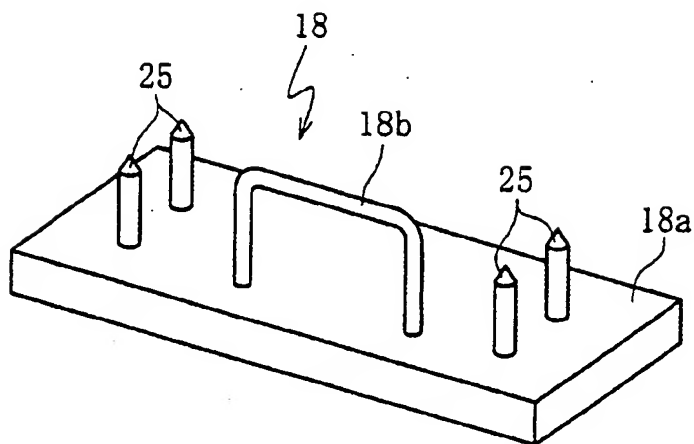
【Fig. 7】



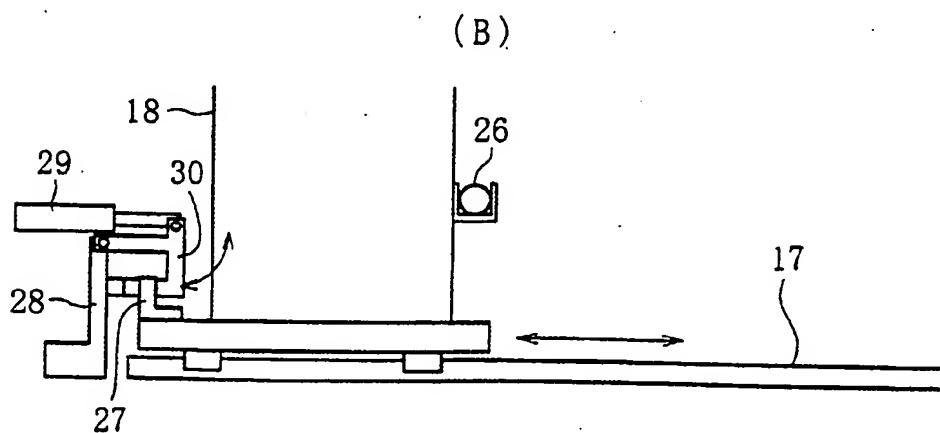
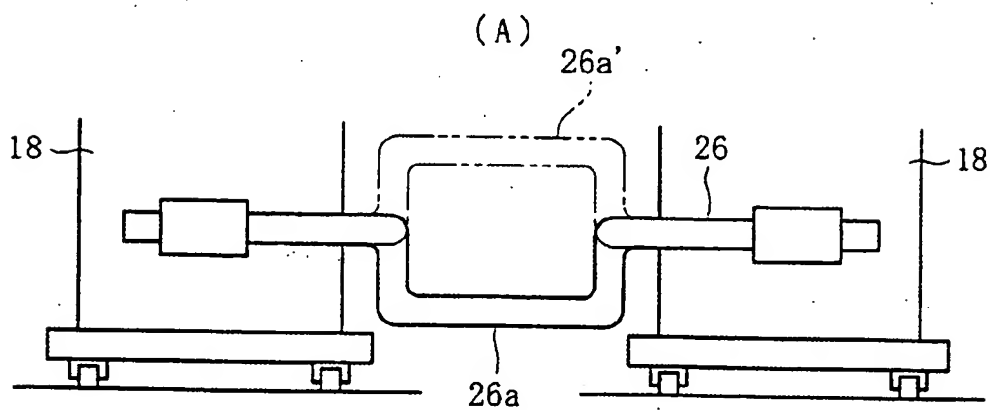
【Fig. 8】



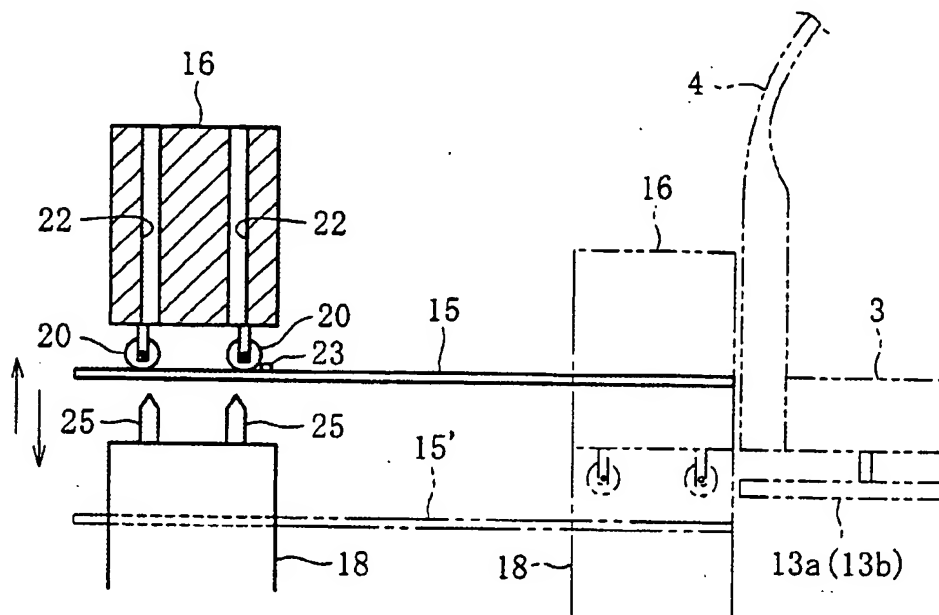
【Fig. 9】



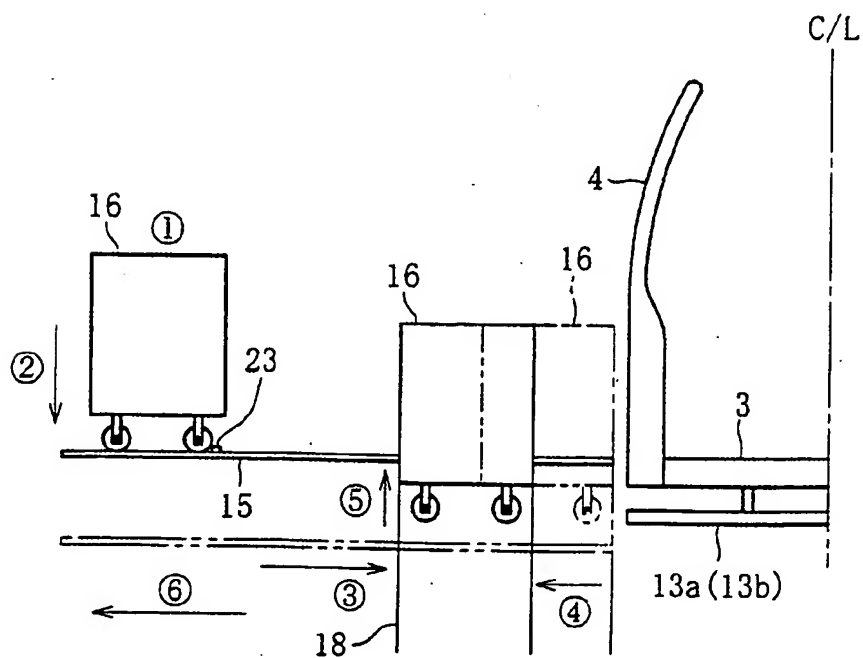
【Fig. 10】



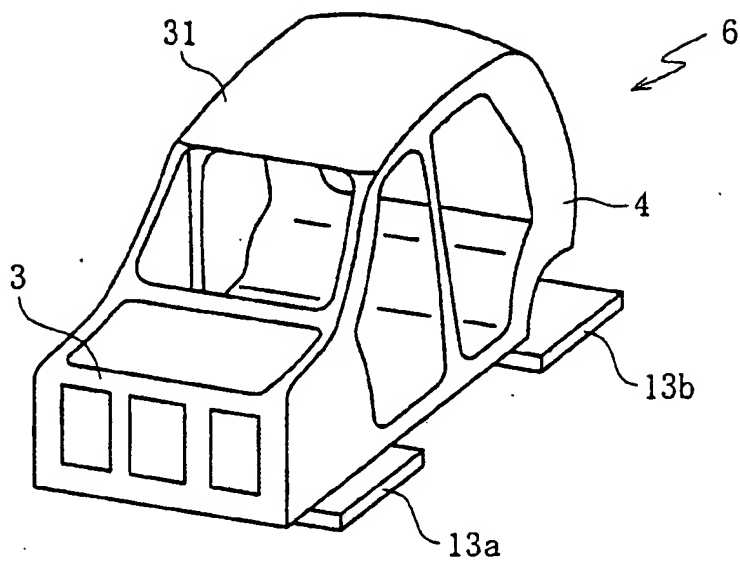
【Fig. 11】



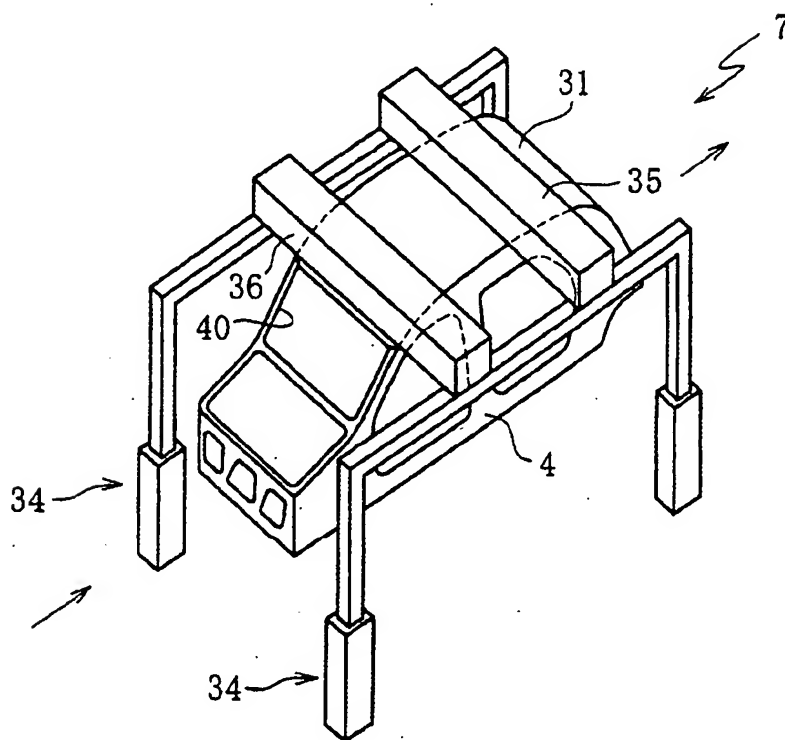
【Fig. 12】



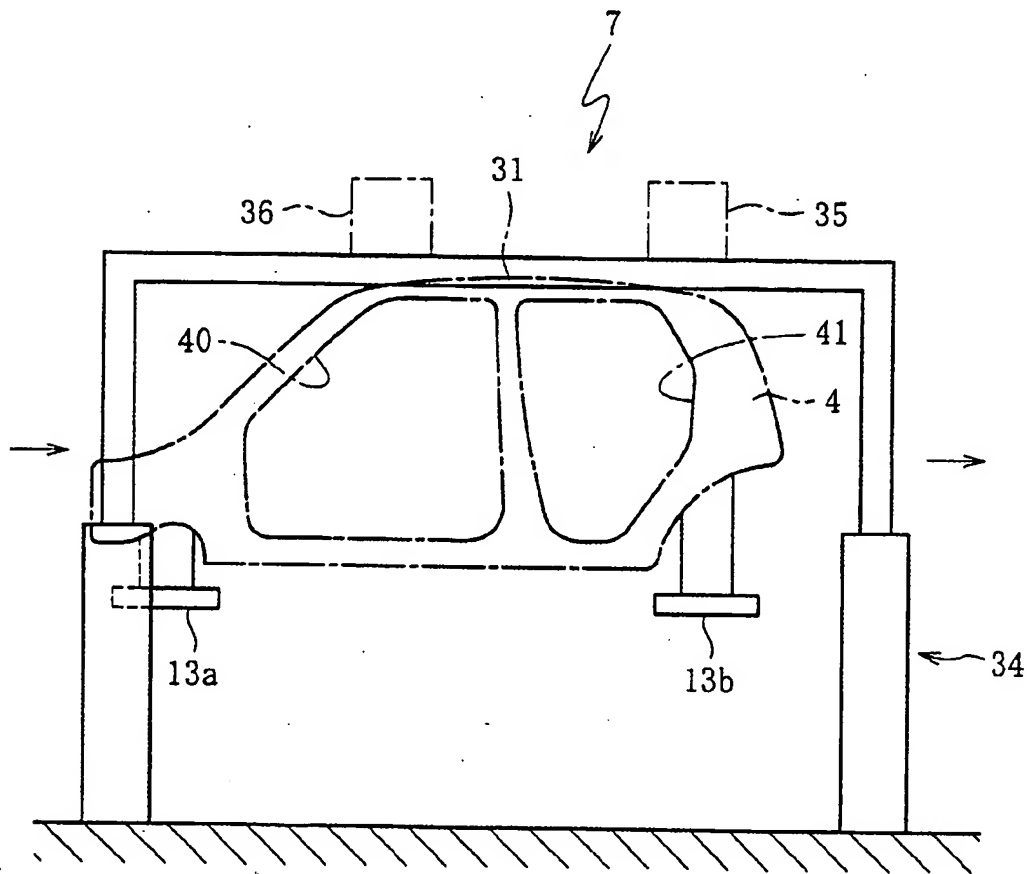
【Fig. 13】



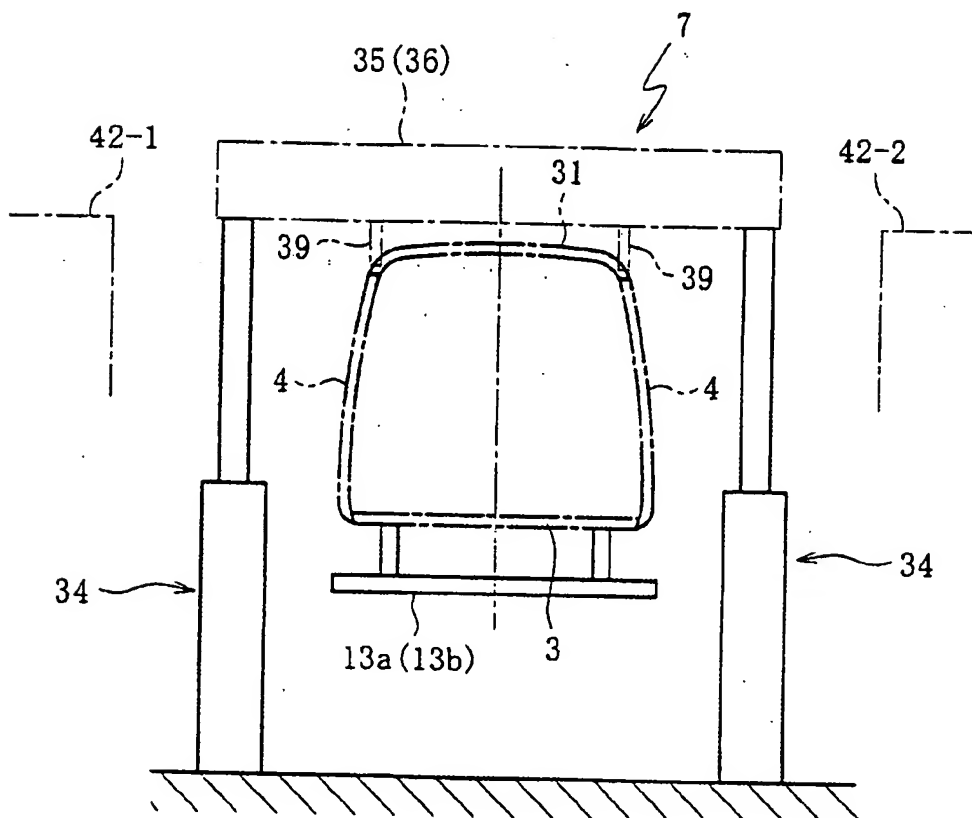
【Fig. 14】



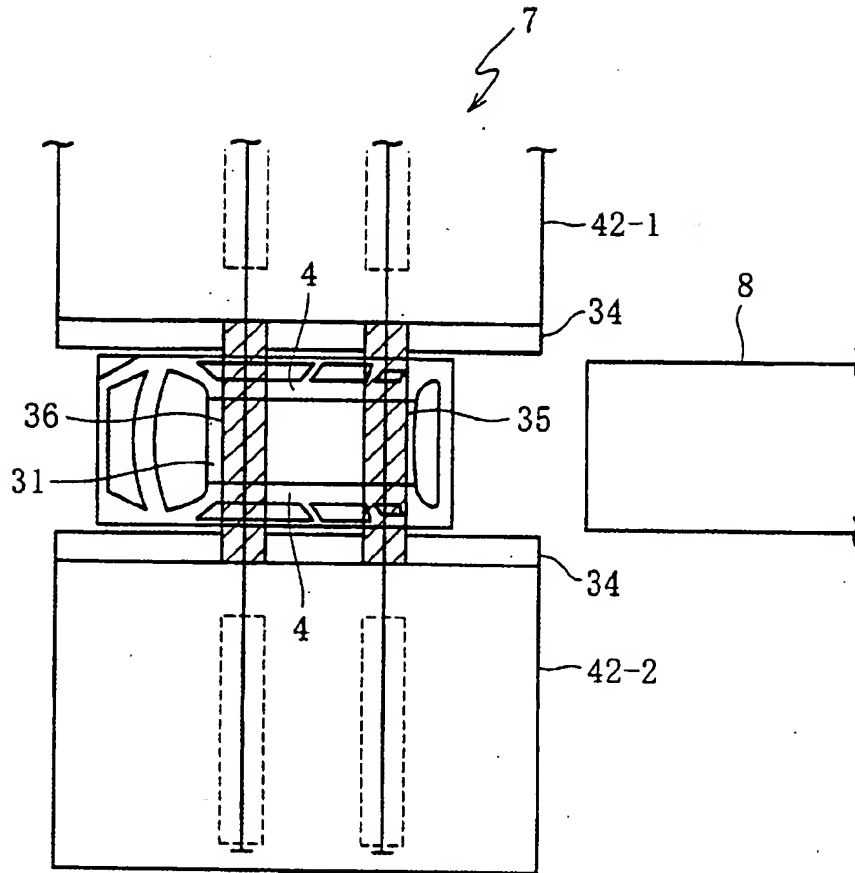
【Fig. 15】



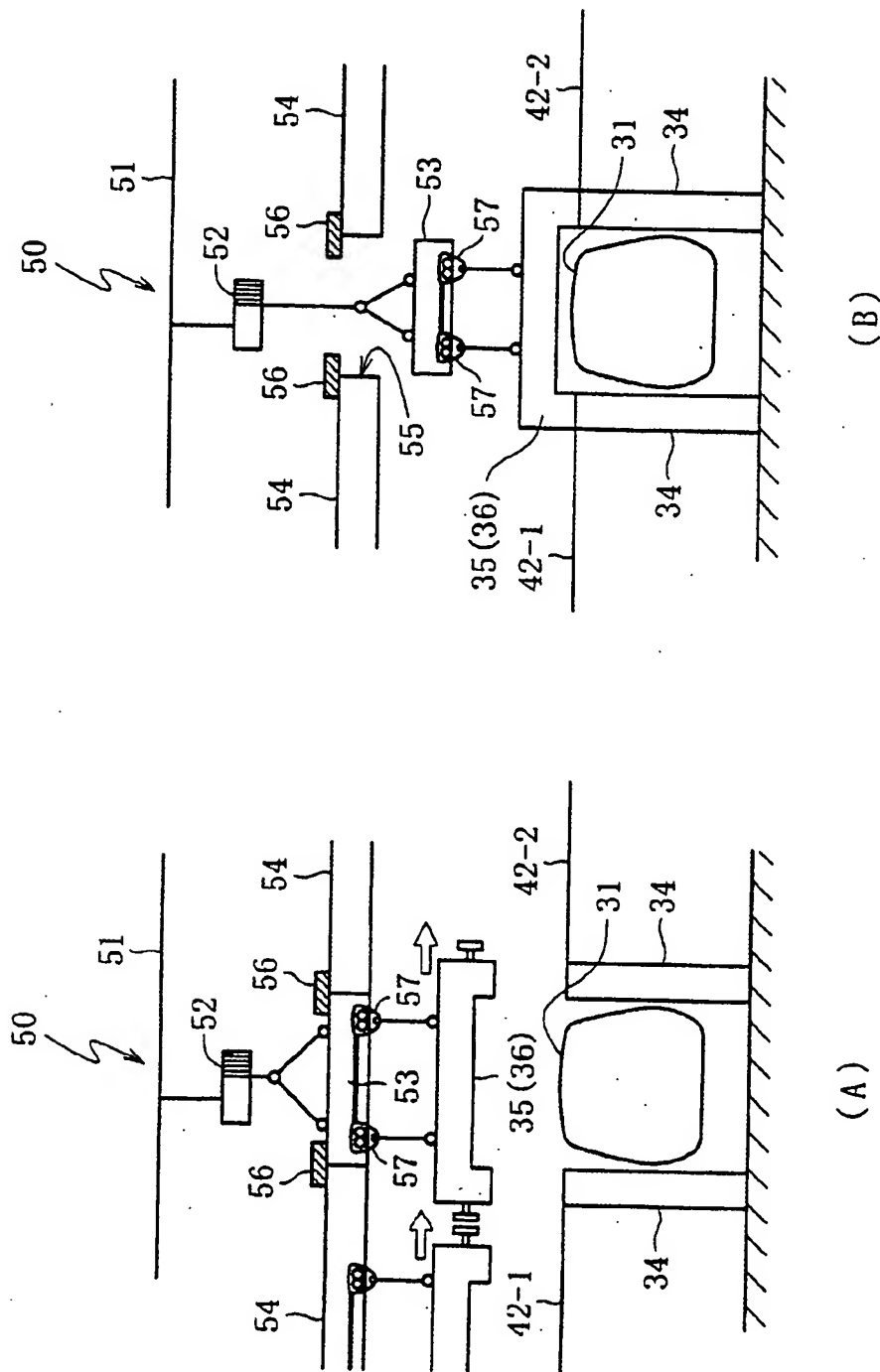
【Fig. 16】



【Fig. 17】

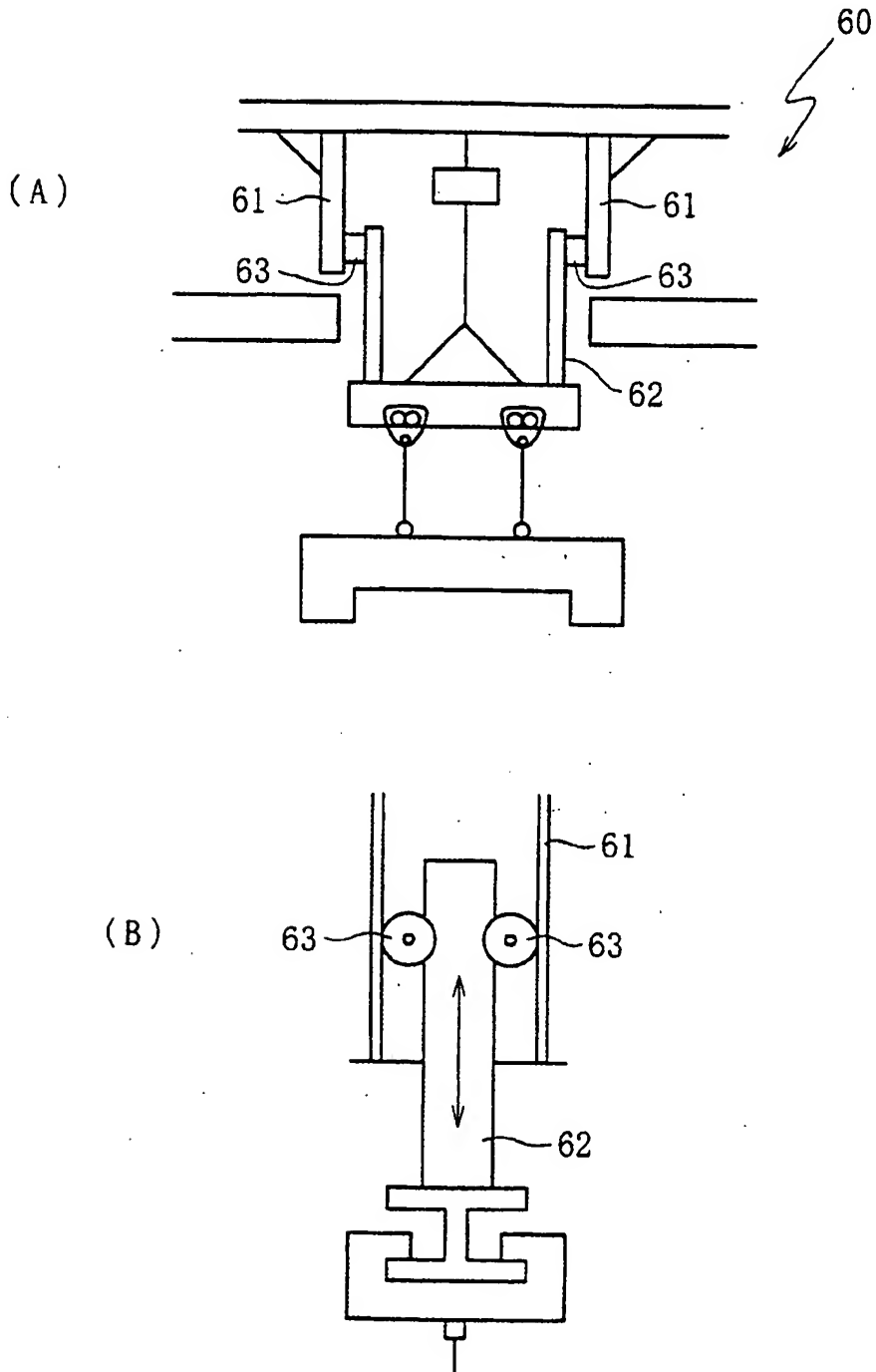


【Fig. 18】

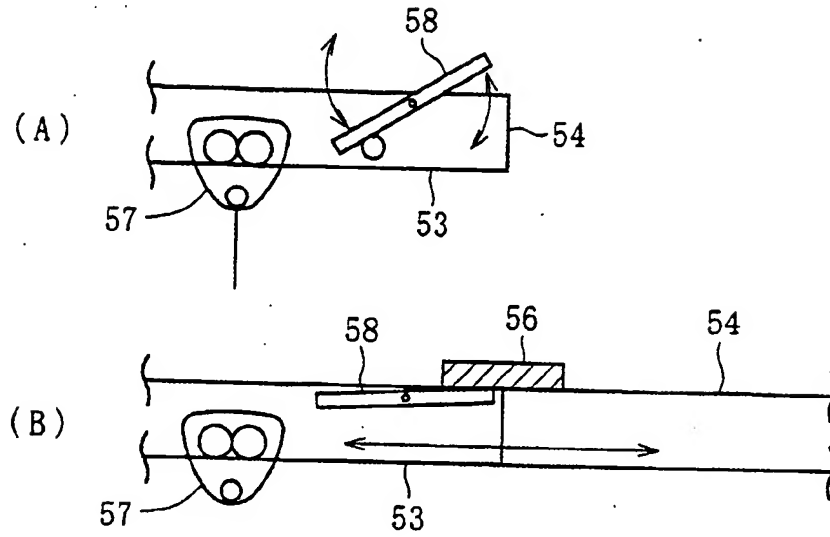




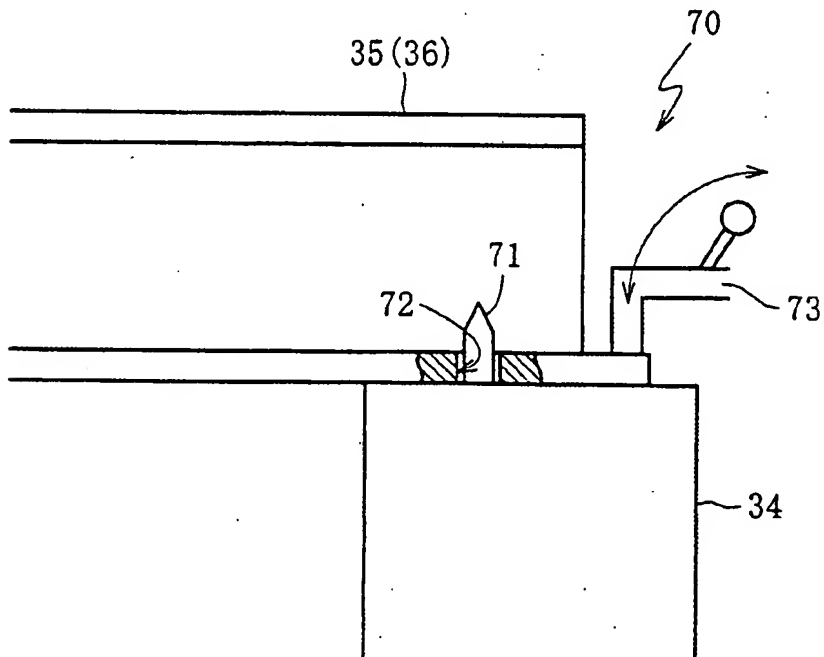
【Fig. 19】



【Fig. 20】



【Fig. 21】



【Fig. 22】

